

the other in London, which must have rendered the task of joint authorship extremely tedious, they are to be congratulated on producing a second edition which does nothing but enhance the reputation of the book.

SAM ORAM

### **Clinical Application of Blood Gases**

by Barry A Shapiro MD

pp xiii + 210 illustrated £5

Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers 1973

London: Lloyd-Luke

This slim volume attempts to provide a basic text of blood gas physiology for 'respiratory therapists', medical students and accomplished physicians. The book is divided into three parts. The first is an account of the basic physiology necessary for the interpretation of the blood gas theory described in part 2. Part 3 is concerned with the clinical assessment of blood gas results.

In about 60 pages it is difficult to more than skate over the basic respiratory physiology – this, in fact, is what the book does. The description of the 'chloride shift' is quite incomprehensible: many of the illustrations in fact illustrate nothing. The illusion that the anatomical dead space is a fixed volume is propagated yet again.  $\text{HbCO}_2$  is not the symbol for reduced haemoglobin. The second section is more complete but that part dealing with the actual calibration of blood gas equipment is inadequate. The final section is more comprehensive, though an otherwise satisfactory account of oxygen therapy is marred by the inability of the author to point out the main danger of oxygen administration to patients with chronic respiratory failure.

In summary, this book is a brave attempt to compress a large amount of knowledge into a relative small volume. Inevitably, such brevity severely limits comprehension.

PETER COLE

### **Basic Surgical Techniques**

by R M Kirk MS FRCS

pp 168 illustrated £1.50

Edinburgh & London: Churchill Livingstone 1973

Most surgeons' techniques are a combination of those practised by their teachers and their own modification of those techniques. In this little book Mr Kirk has set down his own techniques with the aid of simple diagrams and a lucid text. Established surgeons thumbing through this manual will, needless to say, disagree with many points; thus on page 14 I feel that the author advises the use of artery forceps upside down!

This book is not, however, intended for the established surgeon. Indeed, the author in the preface does not even set his sights upon the surgeon in training but hopes his book will be useful to physicians and experimentalists who

may occasionally need to use operative techniques. Useful though it may be to these people, this book will be of interest principally to doctors setting out on a surgical career and it should be unashamedly directed to them, for they will benefit from reading of the methods used by an experienced surgeon. At £1.50 it will be well within the pocket of the junior surgeon and it can be recommended for his use at the outset of his career.

M H IRVING

### **Medicine and Society**

by Henry Miller

pp 87 £0.80 paperback £2.25 library edition

London: Oxford University Press 1973

The series of which this publication is a part is intended to provide a medium for the discussion of various aspects of the impact of scientific discovery and technological development on society.

The issues identified by Dr Miller are all important but those who look for a balanced and dispassionate discussion of them will go unrewarded. Master of the sweeping statement, Dr Miller is partisan and unfair, and his willingness to wound is exceeded only by his readiness to strike: one hopes he does so only because he knows it teases. Psychiatrists, general practitioners, Medical Officers of Health, social workers and chiropodists and what he calls 'banal diseases' fail to capture his interest or his esteem. He has a naive faith in Boards of Governors, believes in larger hospitals, makes astonishingly light of the problems of barbiturate misuse, and believes that the care of patients with chronic disease will only be significantly improved when they come under the supervision of the appropriate specialists throughout their illness. He distinguishes 'genuine' (biochemically determined) depressive illness from other kinds, though without explaining how the distinction is to be made. He looks forward to a further expansion in the use of drugs, pointing out in justification that the British consume less of these than do others in comparable countries, and suggests that as we already have a vast problem of addiction to cigarettes and to alcohol it can do no harm to legalize the use of cannabis.

On the state of dentistry, on population screening, on the care of the mentally subnormal and of the elderly what he has to say is sensible and pointed, but the superficiality of his approach is most clearly seen when he deals with ethical questions, especially the question of abortion. No attempt is made to present – still less to try to understand – the alternative point of view and his use of the technique of pejorative and dismissive terms and language to bury an opposing argument is here most obvious. To